

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

**Vacant Housing in the Context of
a City Neighborhood:
The West Side, St. Paul, Minnesota**

A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.

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Vacant Housing in the Context of a City Neighborhood: The West Side, St. Paul, Minnesota

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September 1999

*This report (NPCR 1137) is also available at the following internet
address: <http://tcfreenet.org/org/npcr>*

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Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization
(NPCR) supported the work of the author of this report but has not reviewed it for publication. The content is solely the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by NPCR.

NPCR is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. NPCR is supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center, the McKnight Foundation, Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the St. Paul Foundation, and The St. Paul.

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I.

Executive Summary

Vacant housing has the potential to mean different things to different people, organizations, and government offices, yet how it is defined or categorized does not affect its emergence in neighborhoods, nor change what occurs in communities when vacant property exists. This report investigates a larger picture of how vacancies may change communities and how communities can thus change vacancies, but the project directly applied this research on vacant residential homes within the West Side Neighborhood of Saint Paul, Minnesota.

A goal set forth for the project was to complete a database of West Side properties in need of redevelopment that might be suitable options for future development by the Neighborhood Development Alliance, NeDA. Maps of the West Side were a second goal, to illustrate the information collected for the database. The end products of this research were to assist NeDA in strategically planning for future development and therefore assisting the West Side community at moving into the future with a strong, well-maintained, and cared-for housing stock.

Most of the potentially developable homes were vacant housing units. The effects of vacant housing in neighborhoods were researched and found to be detrimental to many aspects of community life, including the emergence of negative perceptions of outsiders, property value declines, decreases in neighborhood stability, and lowered resident satisfaction. The issue of vacant property is being addressed as a neighborhood and city concern. Community Development Corporations, CDCs, and the City of Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development are just two examples of groups of

individuals involved in vacant housing issues and looking at various ways to rehabilitate blighted units or demolish and rebuild unsavable homes.

There were obstacles in the research process, but successful products emerged to assist NeDA in planning and as sources of information to supplement further research. Some of the recommendations that evolved suggest that governmental processes need to be more conducive to community organizations, that a more in-depth process of deciding what qualities define a property as good development potential would produce more thorough results, and that a windshield survey of the neighborhood would also expand the accurateness of the data.

II.

Background

A. Vacant Land

Defining vacant in this discussion is important to understanding what is being addressed. Land that has never been developed and land that has been cleared, yet not re-absorbed into the market with a permanent use, are two broad categories of what is considered vacant property (Lukermann, Martin, and de Montille 1991). If land in Saint Paul falls into the first category of "never been developed" there are usually three main options to explain why this is so: the land is and has been too costly to develop, the land is environmentally sensitive and has been legally protected, or the land is considered "excess property" and has not yet been needed (Lukermann, Martin, and de Montille 1991). When land is legally protected for environmental reasons there is no possibility for future development. Yet when the terrain of the land permits development there is the possibility for future residential, commercial, or industrial use when a party who desires the property also has the financial capacity to begin development. Market prices influence the ability of persons to purchase and develop property, thus influencing whether or not land will be developed at all, and if so, the particular use of the parcel of land (Blair 1996).

1. Factors Contributing to Vacant Housing

Vacant in this project is mainly concerned with formerly occupied units that have become vacant, commonly occurring due to economic, locational, social, or physical forces (Blair 1996). Economically, tax forfeiture and mortgage foreclosure are two different results that may occur when a household is no longer financially able to pay their taxes or mortgage payments. The government or a loan institution may then recover

the property and the house could lie vacant for a length of time. Locationally, a demand for land in certain areas increases and decreases with time. As certain areas become more or less in demand as a place to live, people will move in or out of communities, possibly leaving a house vacant as they create a new home in a different neighborhood.

There are many factors that contribute to the locational choices of households. The safety of a community, and whether there are employment opportunities, good schools, and commercial amenities nearby are all attributes potential residents may consider (Nelson and Pitman 1996). Socially, suburban neighborhoods have been appealing for their quiet and safe communities, whereas many central city communities have been fit with perceptions of crime and congestion. In addition to the activities and environment that surround a home, a structure's physical condition and appearance affect the personal perceptions and desires of potential home buyers (Nelson and Pitman 1996). The size, accessibility, maintenance level, and completed code requirements, can each change the demand for a house on the market and consequently change the selection of home buyers (Lukermann, Martin, and de Montille 1991). Each of the social and physical factors that make a home desirable or undesirable will affect whether or not it is vacant and how long it will remain so. The political and financial processes that accompany tax forfeiture and tax delinquent properties are also two critical determinants for evaluating the vacancy status of structures and the timeline for their re-occupancy.

When a residential property goes through the tax-forfeiture process it is extensive and may seem complicated. The process begins when the State and County supply the Saint Paul Housing Redevelopment Authority, HRA, with a list of tax forfeiture properties each year (NeDA). The HRA may place a "hold" on any number of the properties, which

ensures that the property may only be sold to former owners and not on public auction (PED 1998). During the "hold" period the HRA may acquire the property, a process that may last up to one year because the actual procedure of receiving a property's deed from the County or the State may take up to one year (PED 1998). A quick transfer of deed transpires in five months (PED 1998). Some individuals believe that "the lengthy forfeiture process delays the redevelopment of abandoned land as productive properties which generate taxes' (PED 1998:22).

In order for a home to earn the status of "vacant" in the city of Saint Paul it must be unoccupied and one of the following, as stated in the official government definition in Chapter 43 of the St. Paul Legislative Code:

- unsecured
- secured by other than normal means
- a dangerous structure
- condemned
- condemned and illegally occupied
- unoccupied for a period of time over 365 days, during which time the enforcement officer has issued an order to correct nuisance conditions [or]
- the recipient of multiple housing or building code violations (The Saint Paul City Code)

2. Costs Associated with Vacant Housing

Many different concerns accompany the existence of vacant property in communities (Lukermann, Martin, and de Montille 1991). A loss of tax revenues, the perceived and real declines in neighborhood quality of life, and the collection of junk on property are just a few of the issues surrounding vacant parcels (Lukermann, Martin, and de Montille 1991). It has been found that "[a]bandoned tax delinquent land and residential buildings are detrimental to the stability and economic vitality of the neighborhoods in which they are located, causing secondary disinvestment and decreases in property values" (PED

Staff 1998:22). Along with research that cites data concerning the financial downfalls of having vacant property in neighborhoods, negative perceptions of neighbors and outsiders also appear as vacant property emerges. People may leave the community because their property's value experiences a real decline or they anticipate a decline in the near future (Kellner "Accessing" 1997, Myott 1999). Others may leave because they no longer feel safe living near abandoned property.

It is often the case that middle and upper income residents are those able to move out of less desirable communities, and those of lower socio-economic status often move in as new residents to the community. This flight of particular households has often had the effect of financially and socially destabilizing communities (Myott 1999). Lori Mardock (1998) cited that the following were some of the costs associated with abandoned housing that neighborhoods could experience.

- * lower property values leading to the erosion of the property tax base
- * maintenance costs (including general health and safety hazards) associated with securing vacant buildings
- * demolition costs of properties that are beyond saving
- * secondary impacts of depressed surrounding property values and property tax revenue
- * the discouragement of private investment by surrounding property owners
- * damage to the overall physical appearance of the neighborhood

3. The Use of Vacant Housing Information

The presence or absence of vacant buildings is often used as a neighborhood indicator in Early Warning Systems, which can be used to predict neighborhood stability (Kellner 1997, Myott 1999). Two positive aims which neighborhood indicators try to achieve include, "developing dynamic models of neighborhood change" and setting goals for

neighborhood and resident improvement (Sawicki 1996:7). The presence of and number of vacant units in a neighborhood can be a meaningful indicator of future neighborhood stability and may work as both cause and effect (Kellner "Accessing" 1997). Not only will the presence of and number of vacant housing units help predict instability, but instability by other means will help predict the presence of vacant housing as well (Kellner "Accessing" 1997). Many other neighborhood stability factors work in much the same way, including community crime rates and property tax delinquency numbers. Early Warning Systems assist community organizations in strategically planning for the future because the compilation of factors that affect residential communities, including the status of vacant housing, will aid them in locating certain block areas that are in need of attention and identifying where funding could be focused.

In light of what negative effects may occur because vacant properties exist in a neighborhood, one can view the presence of vacant property as a positive opportunity and not just a threat in a community (Lukermann, Martin, and de Montille 1991). Vacant parcels can be viewed as "potential assets and resources" to stabilize neighborhoods and improve their tax bases (Kellner 1997). Viewing vacant parcels in a positive light will aid government agencies and social service organizations in finding innovative, effective, and efficient methods of utilizing vacant parcels in the city.

B. The Context of Vacant Housing for This Report

1. The City of Saint Paul

The current status of vacant property in the City of Saint Paul is determined differently by the definition chosen. The Metropolitan Council's 1984 classification of vacant lands cited 6.8%, 2,445 acres, of Saint Paul's land as vacant. The Ramsey County Assessor's records for Saint Paul classified 5,632 acres as vacant, but included "undeveloped park and recreation land" and vacant railroads. Of the 5,632 acres, less than forty percent was privately held and 6,096 separate parcels were identified. After the Ramsey County Park and Open Space System land, DNR property at Pike Island, and holdings along the Mississippi River were omitted only 3,660 acres of the 5,632, were left vacant (Lukermann, Martin, and Montille 1991).

Although this may seem like an unworkable number of vacant units, the number of vacant residential units is smaller and Saint Paul is divided into neighborhoods, which allows communities to approach vacant units separately in their area. The City of Saint Paul contains 117,000 total housing units and it is approximated that by the year 2020, "3,000 new households will live in existing homes that were vacant in 1990" with another 6,000 new units being added to the current residential housing stock (The Saint Paul Planning Commission 1999:5). Saint Paul's goal in constructing, planning, and designing the new homes is to "enhance the traditional character of...neighborhoods, [and] strengthen the city's sense of place" while maintaining "a strong commitment to the rehabilitation, maintenance and preservation of its existing housing stock" (The Saint Paul Planning Commission 1999:5).

These goals are critical links to the methods utilized in neighborhoods that are concerned with vacant houses, because some vacant homes may be demolished and new homes built in their place, or new homes may be built in areas near currently vacant parcels. Saint Paul's comprehensive plan recognizes that restrengthening the community will be necessary in such areas. Also, there are very few vacant homes not in need of some repair, which calls for recreating a livable housing stock in Saint Paul's communities through the rehabilitation, maintenance, and preservation efforts of vacant units. One of St. Paul's many goals outlined in the City's Housing Plan of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan is to "[s]trategically focus efforts to stem deterioration and declining values" (The Saint Paul Planning Commission 1999:12). This single objective is directly connected to plans concerning vacant homes, because as it was mentioned earlier, vacant parcels contribute to both neighborhood deterioration and declining property values. Curbing these effects includes addressing vacancy rates in Saint Paul's communities.

2. The Neighborhood Development Alliance, NeDA

The Neighborhood Development Alliance, NeDA, was formed in 1988 to serve as a Community Development Corporation on the West Side. Its mission "...to strengthen the vitality of the West Side neighborhood while preserving and creating housing and economic opportunities for residents of all income levels" (NeDA Staff 1998:3) reflects common interests with the city's Housing Plan. Vacant homes and land are parcels where NeDA preservation efforts and new housing ventures can take place. In pursuit of a stronger West Side residential community, NeDA concentrates "limited resources in targeted geographic areas by pursuing high visibility projects likely to be a catalyst for other improvements and by using dynamic, incremental processes that include rebuilding

the connections between people as well as the physical infrastructure of the neighborhood" (NeDA Staff 1998:4).

NeDA has accomplished many projects and initiatives since its inspection on the West Side. The following are many of the projects implemented by NeDA:

- 1 Bluff Park Homes, a project that converted 116 units of rundown housing into 73 units of low and moderate income apartments and townhouses
- 2 CHIP, a program that assisted 15 homeowners with the rehabilitation or purchase and rehabilitation of their homes
- 3 559 State Street, a joint project between NeDA and Habitat for Humanity where rental units were renovated back to the structure's original 6 units and sold as owner occupied
- 4 Wabasha Terrace, a project that constructed 11 units of low-income rental housing
- 5 Wabasha Center, a project that built a commercial building housing the NeDA offices and a daycare center
- 6 Riverview, a project that created 7 new single family homes, rehabbed 2 single family homes and implemented a matching grants program for single family homeowners
- 7 GAP Rehab, a joint rehabilitation project with an area alternative high school
- 8 Mt. Hope Addition, a project redeveloping an former hospital site
- 9 Oakdale Prescott Project (OPP), a project where homeowners received financial assistance for home improvements
- 10 Community Stewardship, a program that engaged 200 people in community beautification and home improvement projects from January to August in 1996
- 11 Various other rehab projects sold to current homeowners
- 12 Bilingual mortgage home loan counseling and home buyer education services, serving nearly 700 clients in 5 years
- 13 Other services available include home inspections, construction consulting, and tax assistance by volunteer tax preparers

After 9 years of development work on the West Side, in August of 1998, NeDA had *directly developed* 108 multifamily affordable rental units and 30 homeowner units (NeDA Staff 1998).

3. The West Side Neighborhood

The Neighborhood Development Alliance concentrates its efforts inside the West Side Neighborhood of St. Paul, bordered by the Mississippi River to the north, east, and west and Annapolis Avenue to the south. The West Side Neighborhood is home to 15,200 residents, and is considered a neighborhood in transition because it is at a place where the outcome of whether the community will improve or decline is uncertain

(Nelson and Pitman 1996). NeDA has been working diligently to ensure that the future of residents' lives on the West Side continues to show improvement.

In 1996, the housing values on the West Side ranged from \$35,300 to \$72,700 and "the number of days a West Side residential property was on the market was less than for the city as a whole" (NeDA Staff 1998:3). Over four years, from 1995 to 1998 the median price for existing single-family homes on the West Side increased from \$62,000 to \$78,900, a 16.1 % increase, the highest of all Saint Paul neighborhoods (St. Paul Area Association 1998). As property values have been rising West Side housing is in higher demand than it has been in the recent past.

Using 1990 Census data Nelson and Pitman created a profile of the West Side. There are 5,907 housing units, over half of which were built before 1939. Fifty-one percent are single family detached structures; 70% are one or two unit structures and 57% of the housing units are owner-occupied. The condition of housing according to a 1989 survey by the Department of Planning and Economic Development labeled 4.3%, of the 3,495 structures rated, as "below average". Over five years from 1991 to 1995 approximately 130 houses became vacant in the West Side Neighborhood with over 65% of those reoccupied and 28 demolished during the same time period (Nelson and Pitman 1996).

4. Vacant Housing Goals

In early 1987 the staff of the St. Paul City Department of Planning and Economic Development implemented the Vacant Housing Program (Lukermann, Martin, and Montille 1991). They had four goals set forth for the program: to decrease the number of vacant or blighted units, to increase ownership options, to encourage more non-profit housing improvement ventures, and to help neighborhood organizations set and achieve

their housing goals (Lukermann, Martin, and Montille 1991). NeDA's work in the neighborhood responds to the PED's Vacant Housing Program goals by considering vacant houses as great potential properties to purchase and to create as new, stable homes in the West Side community. Reversing the effects of blighted and/or vacant property and attracting new homeowners to an established and improving community are both goals that NeDA strives to attain.

III. This Project

A. Goals

The Neighborhood Development Alliance is interested in the well-being of the West Side's housing and resident community, and having relevant information about properties they are interested in obtaining is important, if NeDA is to assist in affecting change in the community. Knowing this, NeDA desired a database of West Side properties that would be good development potential for the organization. The information collected on the properties would be used for "development planning, and to ensure an effective approach to transforming and enriching the West Side" (Agnessi 1999:3). Some methods were already in place at NeDA for identifying parcels in need of development, but a thorough listing of properties and a process of gathering needed information about them was not. The purpose of this project then was to establish such a database in a form that would be accessible and maintainable, as well as informative and helpful to employees at NeDA.

The second part of the project was to create a set of maps, utilizing the information gathered for the database. Originally, the goals for the maps were for them to be maintainable, accessible, integrative, and illustrative. As the project progressed these

goals changed. The maps could not be made as maintainable nor accessible projects to be reproduced again in their original form. The extensive amount of time it would have required to teach the necessary skills for manipulating GIS software was too great for either the project intern or a NeDA staff member. The maps were successfully integrative since many different information sources were used to create the database responsible for coding the maps; the maps were also illustrative of the various topics they exhibit. A second goal of the mapping portion was to illustrate the activities and accomplishments of NeDA as a Community Development Corporation and to sell NeDA as an agency to residents, funders, government offices, and the West Side Neighborhood.

B. Methods

The initial task was to create a grid for the database using Microsoft Excel, software that employees of NeDA will be able to understand and maintain into the future. The development director at NeDA established the fields of information to incorporate into the database. His experience in residential development for community housing agencies directed him to use the following fields as guides to acquiring desirable information on the properties that may be future development opportunities for NeDA.

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Property Identification Number* | Mailing Address* |
| Tax Payer Name | Tax Payer Mailing Address |
| Phone Number | Lot Dimensions |
| Foreclosure Status | Assessments |
| Tax Assessed Value* | Homestead Status* |
| Number of Years Tax Delinquent* | Legal Description |
| Rehab Condition | Zoning Classification* |
| Parcel Use (Residential, Commercial, Industrial)* | Date of Last Sale* |
| Structure Type (Single Family, Duplex, Triplex, Multi-Unit)* | |

The property attributes were selected for their helpfulness in completing a decision to purchase a property and the transaction of obtaining a deed for a property. Some fields

were helpful in determining what type of funding would be available for the purchase of a property, such as the parcel use, structure type, and rehab condition. Others were more helpful in determining when a certain property would be for sale, such as a parcel's foreclosure status or tax delinquent status, both of which are very lengthy processes laden with specific timelines. The categories followed by an asterisk were purchased from the Ramsey County Property Records and Revenue office for all the parcels located on the West Side.

After the specific information fields were established and defined, the next step was to prepare a list of properties that had "good development potential". This became a synthesizing task, by combining many different sources of information together into one data set. The process began with the list of houses on the Vacant Building Task Force list, and it was this beginning that eventually led to the project's emphasis on vacant units in the neighborhood as the prime source of units in need of development. The Vacant Building Task Force list utilized the Official Publication for Ramsey County, Notice of Sale of Tax-Forfeited Lands, Commissioner District 5 and the Citizen Service Office, Nuisance Building Code, Enforcement Unit, Vacant Building Quarterly List, Ward 2. The Vacant Building Task Force met monthly to discuss West Side vacant properties from the sources just mentioned. The neighborhood officer for the Nuisance Building Code Enforcement Unit religiously attended the meetings and greatly contributed to the amount of detailed information available on each property.

An additional source used for the property list was NeDA documents. This source did not prove to be very worthwhile, as much of the data was outdated. The research intern for this project did perform a few limited windshield surveys at the beginning of

the project in order to establish the placement of vacant lots, but a time constraint prevented a complete windshield survey of the entire West Side Neighborhood. A list of vacant lands within District 3 of Saint Paul was obtained from a receptive member of the Department of Planning and Economic Development, Paul Mordorski, and this list was useful for the mapping portion of the project. The only remaining source of information used to complete the list of properties on the database was input from NeDA employees, many of who live in the neighborhood.

Once the properties had been identified, information needed to be gathered on each of the properties. The methods applied for gathering the information consisted of manipulating IRIS, an Integrated Realty Information System, combining previously acquired information from NeDA records, and buying a database of attributes from the Ramsey County Property Records and Revenue Office, as marked earlier by asterisks. If one is able to visit the Abstract Department of the Property Records and Revenue Office of Ramsey County in downtown Saint Paul, public information can be accessed for specific properties. Yet, when telephoned the individuals working for the department cited IRIS as the most up-to-date county information system available, excluding the information listed for last sale date of a property, which could be up to 3 months behind. Beth Hyser from H-MARC, a Community Development Corporation in Saint Paul, relayed information that IRIS was also not complete and up-to-date on tax delinquency information (Hyser 1999). The only accurate source for obtaining information on delinquent tax amount, fee amounts, years, and so on then would be to personally go to the downtown city office and request the data (Hyser 1999).

A later addition to this project was to supplement the development potential database with a listing of homes with which NeDA had done work. This meant gathering the addresses of homes from each member of the NeDA staff. The list included homes that had been built new, had been rehabilitated, had been a participant in homeowner counseling, or had received a home-improvement loan.

After the different outlets were accessed and the information was entered into the database the first product of the project was complete and ready to be utilized. This meant that maps could be created of the West Side to visually portray some of the information obtained. Eric Myott and Sonya Geis were employed to assist with making the maps because they were both familiar with Geographic Information System (GIS) software, had access to mapping facilities at the University of Saint Thomas, and had personal time available. A shape file, containing parcel boundaries and a street grid of the West Side Neighborhood, was brought to the GIS lab at the University of Saint Thomas along with the created NeDA database and the purchased parcel information from the county. These three sources provided all the external information needed to produce the West Side maps.

There were eight total maps created for NeDA. The titles of the maps are as follows, and can be viewed in Appendix A of this report.

1. West Side Land Use, District 3, Saint Paul, MN
2. NeDA Direct Development
3. NeDA Assisted Units
4. NeDA Assisted Units and Direct Development
5. Development Potential
6. Tax Assessed Property Values
7. Property Ownership Status
8. Tax Delinquent Properties

It is important to note that the information contained in the database and maps is not 100% complete and accurate. The information was collected to the best of the intern's knowledge and abilities, taking into account that the information received from government offices may often not be current or accurate. While understanding this, the information has created a good representation of the state of the West Side Neighborhood.

C. Limitations

During the progression of this project there were many difficulties and substantial time delays in acquiring information on properties as well as collecting the necessary data for the map making process. When IRIS was initially used to gather data on properties, there were direct contradictions within the system on single properties, which created the unknown of which data was correct and which was incorrect. The problem was eliminated concerning this project when nearly all of the data collected on IRIS was substituted at a later date with the information purchased from the County. Yet it still remains that there are concerns with the accurateness of data on IRIS, a common tool of many organizations, including CDCs. The government office that maintains IRIS was questioned on some of the incongruences found for this project, but there was not any follow-up on the progress of changing the problems.

Gathering data from governmental offices was not an efficient task either. A West Side shape file with coding data for streets and parcels boundaries was used to make the maps, and was obtained through the City of Saint Paul Public Works office at the end result of a long line of phones. As "property" of Ramsey County, Saint Paul City Offices are able to obtain information free of cost, but when others, outside the jurisdiction of the

government are interested in the data there are monetary fees. In previous years neighborhood organizations had been able to receive the data free of charge from the county, yet this method proved unfeasible in 1999 and NeDA, a non-profit institution, did not have funds to purchase a shape file of the West Side that would have cost hundreds of dollars. Therefore, after the county commissioner was telephoned, numerous other connections were made, and weeks had passed, the City Department of Public Works supplied NeDA with the necessary information.

D. Recommendations

This project illustrates that data and information from Ramsey Count and the City of Saint Paul are being used outside of government offices. As the intern for NeDA, I was also able to talk with other interns and it became apparent that many organizations make use of public government data. Thus, it would seem beneficial to the government to create an easier process of obtaining it. If community groups are using the information for the betterment of their communities this may then reduce the amount of time and funds the city or county need to allocate towards the improvement of neighborhoods. At the beginning of this decade such recommendations were being made by researchers in the Twin Cities. "As development attention in the past two years has shifted to the problems of neighborhoods, ...creating new institutional mechanisms to remain apace" is necessary (Lukermann, Martin, and Montille 1991:44). In such a case I believe that the governmental institutions must begin to look at more efficient and effective methods of supplying information outside government lines.

The products of this finished project include a database of properties, primarily vacant units; a set of maps of the West Side Neighborhood; a near-complete list of all previous NeDA accomplishments; and a database of over 4,000 West Side parcels, purchased from the county. I believe there are ways in which these products can be utilized in positive ways at NeDA. The databases can be potential investigative tools, and an easily accessible parcel information source; they also will continue to be helpful if they are maintained when more current information is known. The maps can be used as visual representations of the neighborhood and can also help strategically plan for future development by looking for trends and concentrations on each of the separate maps, possibly locating new target areas for various funding sources or innovative projects.

I also believe that from this project the role of the Vacant Building Task Force could be strengthened as a source of important community knowledge, effort, and time. By gathering neighborhood members together, more active decisions could result from the meetings. If more people were present or there was more time available for those attending to follow-up on the issues considered, aggressive investigations and pursuits of property information could be sought more consistently and result in ways to change the current situations of individual properties. This would require more outreach to involve community members and also the existence of personnel and funding at NeDA to be able to act on the gathered information.

Further research in the area of vacant housing on the West Side in Saint Paul could beneficially begin with designing a process of how to determine what properties could be considered "good development potential". This question was not thoroughly defined in the early stages of this project, which altered the quality of the database list and thus the

map illustrating where development potential may exist. The majority of the properties listed were vacant houses, yet naturally, there are other homes that are in need of redevelopment attention, including numerous deteriorated rental units. If a list of "good development potential qualities" was created and a method of learning which homes fit the required characteristics, the results would be more extensive and more helpful in assisting NeDA with their future plans.

A thorough windshield survey of parcels on the West Side would be a second avenue of further research, because then the list of qualities and the established method of assessing properties could be utilized with a very current source of information. This research idea would be time demanding, and may or may not be the most beneficial use of an intern's efforts at NeDA since the findings of the research would be best utilized soon after the project was finished. The investigation and creation of an Early Warning System on the West Side could also be an alternative choice for research. Utilizing vacant housing information and taking into account many additional factors that affect the stability of the neighborhood would be very helpful in thoroughly assessing what areas or parcels are in need of attention. This too would be an intense project, but if pursued early, one would be able to make use of the county information collected for this report.

IV.

Conclusion

I believe the outcomes of this project were successful in achieving the set goals. A newly created database now exists with relevant information on all the parcels located in the West Side Neighborhood. Maps are available to illustrate much of what is contained within the database, and NeDA has these two new tools for investigation and presentation purposes. I hope that this full report has given the reader a sense of how vacant properties can emerge in a neighborhood, the affects they can have on a neighborhood, and some methods pursued by people that investigate what positive steps of action may be taken to change current situations.

V.

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VI.

Acknowledgements

Mark Agnessi
Gail Merriam
Eric Myott
Paul Mordorski
Karen Beaudette
Rick Person
Melody Bridgeman
Beth Hyser
Kris Nelson

Neighborhood Development Alliance Staff
The University of St. Thomas
Sonya Geis
Paul Montgomery
Fran Santag
Dennis Senty
Curt Peterson
Garry Hesser

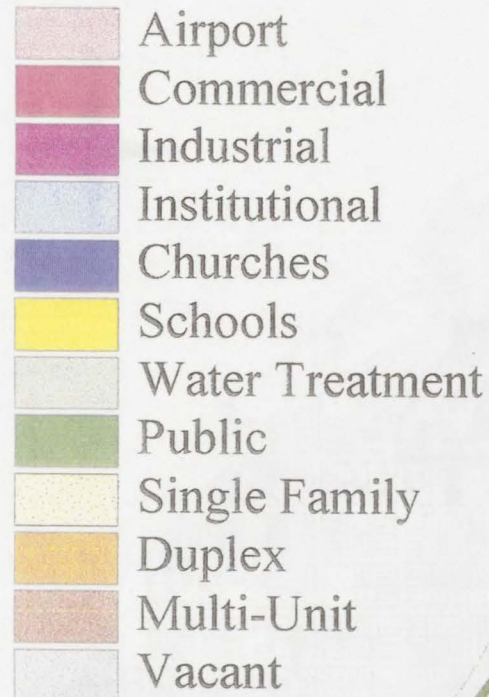
Appendix A

West Side Land Use

District 3, Saint Paul, MN



Land Use



SOURCE: City of St. Paul, Department of Public Works, 1998
1999 Ramsey County Property Records and Revenue

Designed by: Rebecca Brown, Sonya Geis, and Eric Myott (mylloe@hotmail.com)
Contact: Neighborhood Development Alliance, 651-292-0131

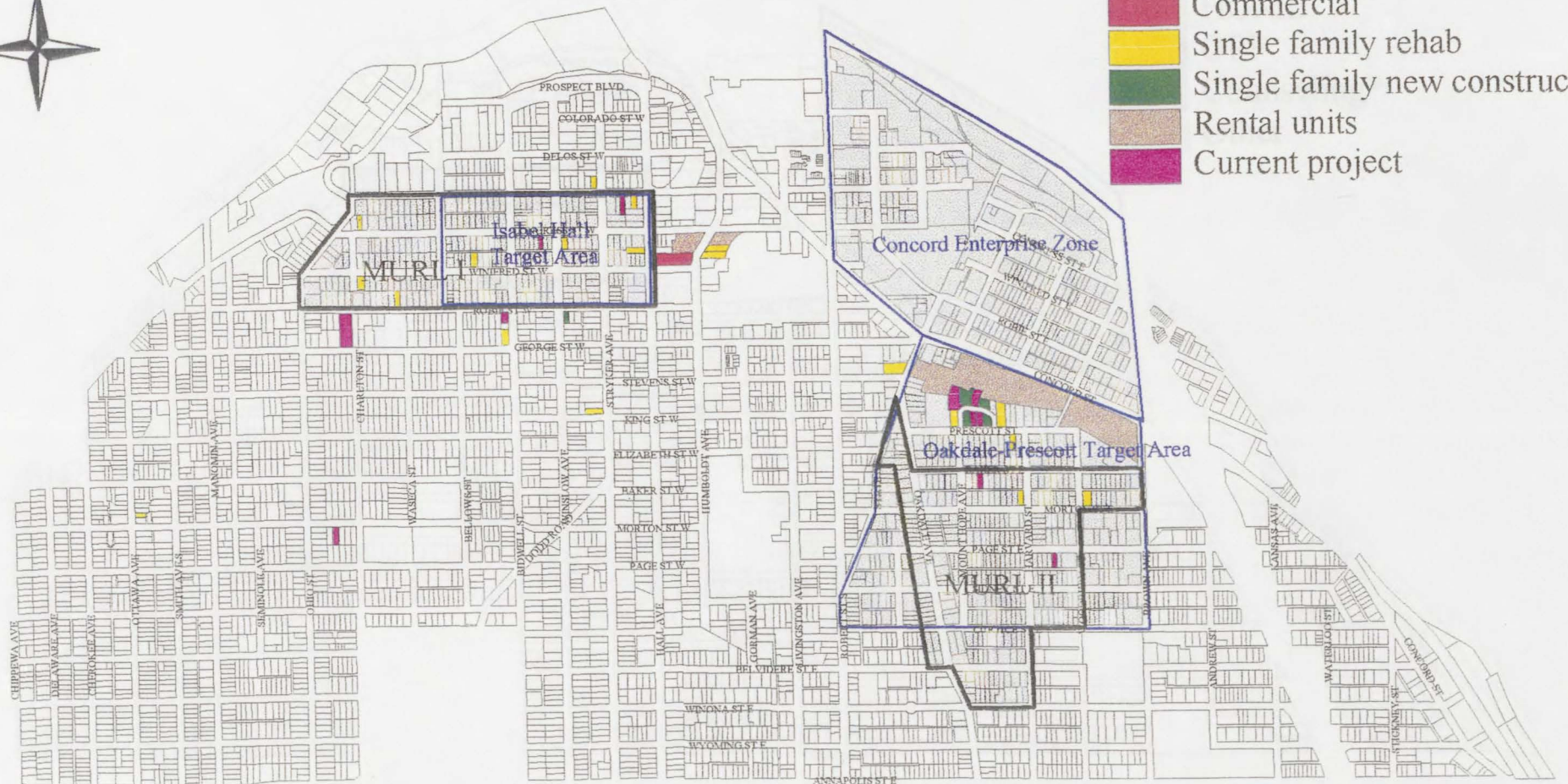
Neighborhood Development Alliance

Direct Development

West Side, Saint Paul, Minnesota

Direct Development Types

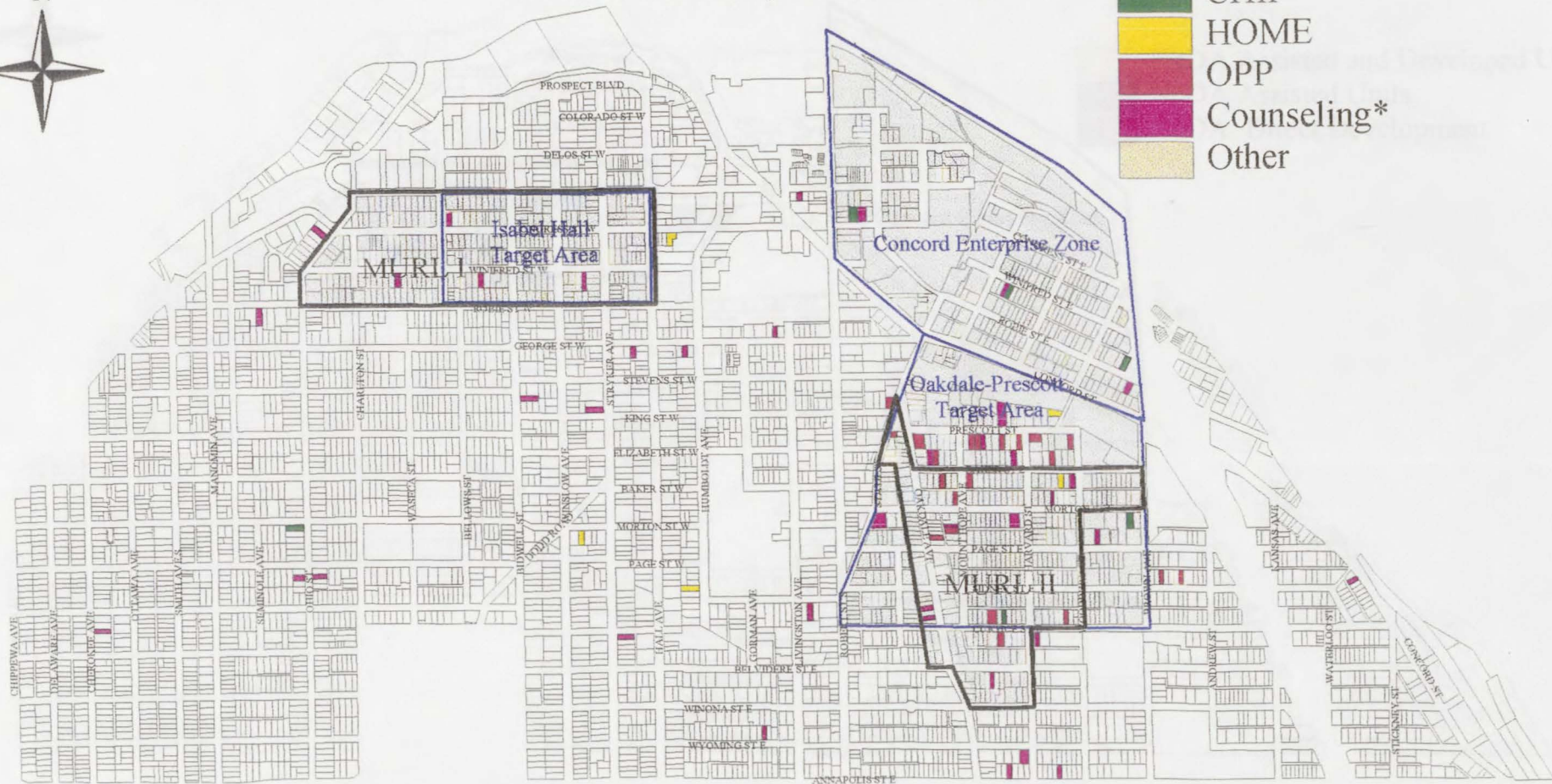
- Commercial
- Single family rehab
- Single family new construction
- Rental units
- Current project



Neighborhood Development Alliance Projects West Side

Saint Paul, Minnesota

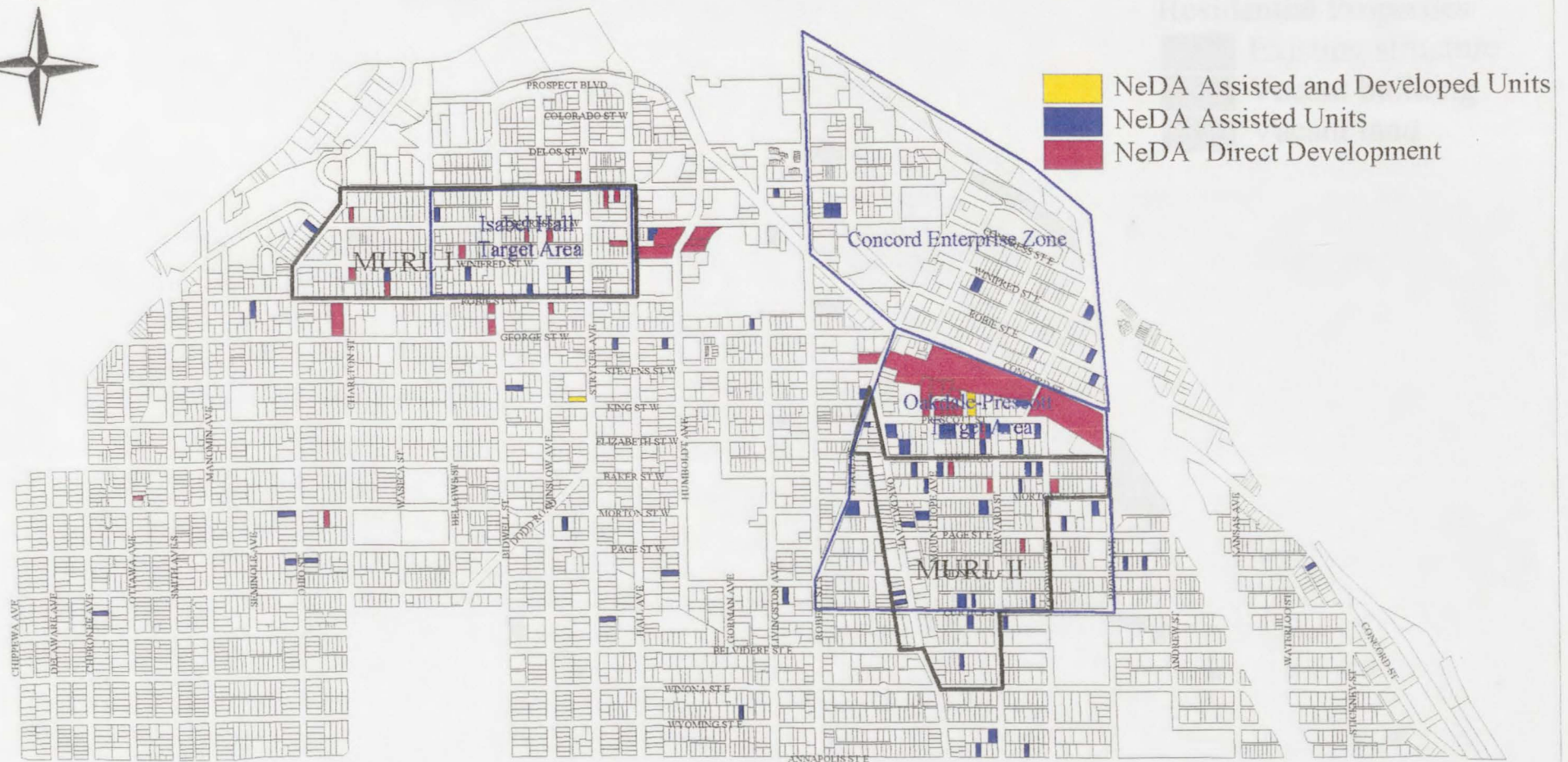
Assisted Units



SOURCE: Neighborhood Development Alliance

* home purchased through NeDA homeowner counseling

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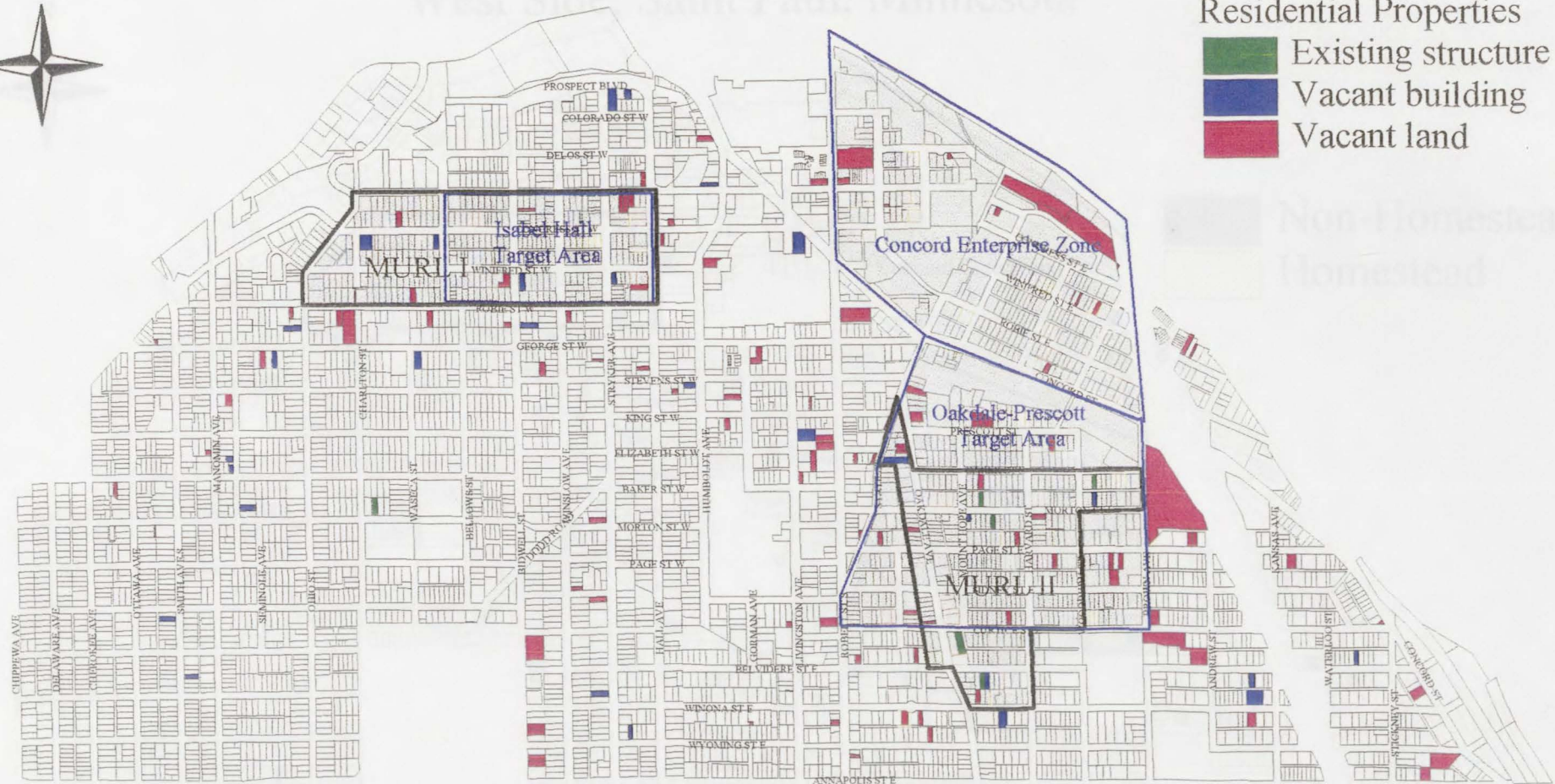
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Development Potential on the West Side Saint Paul, Minnesota



Residential Properties

- Existing structure
- Vacant building
- Vacant land



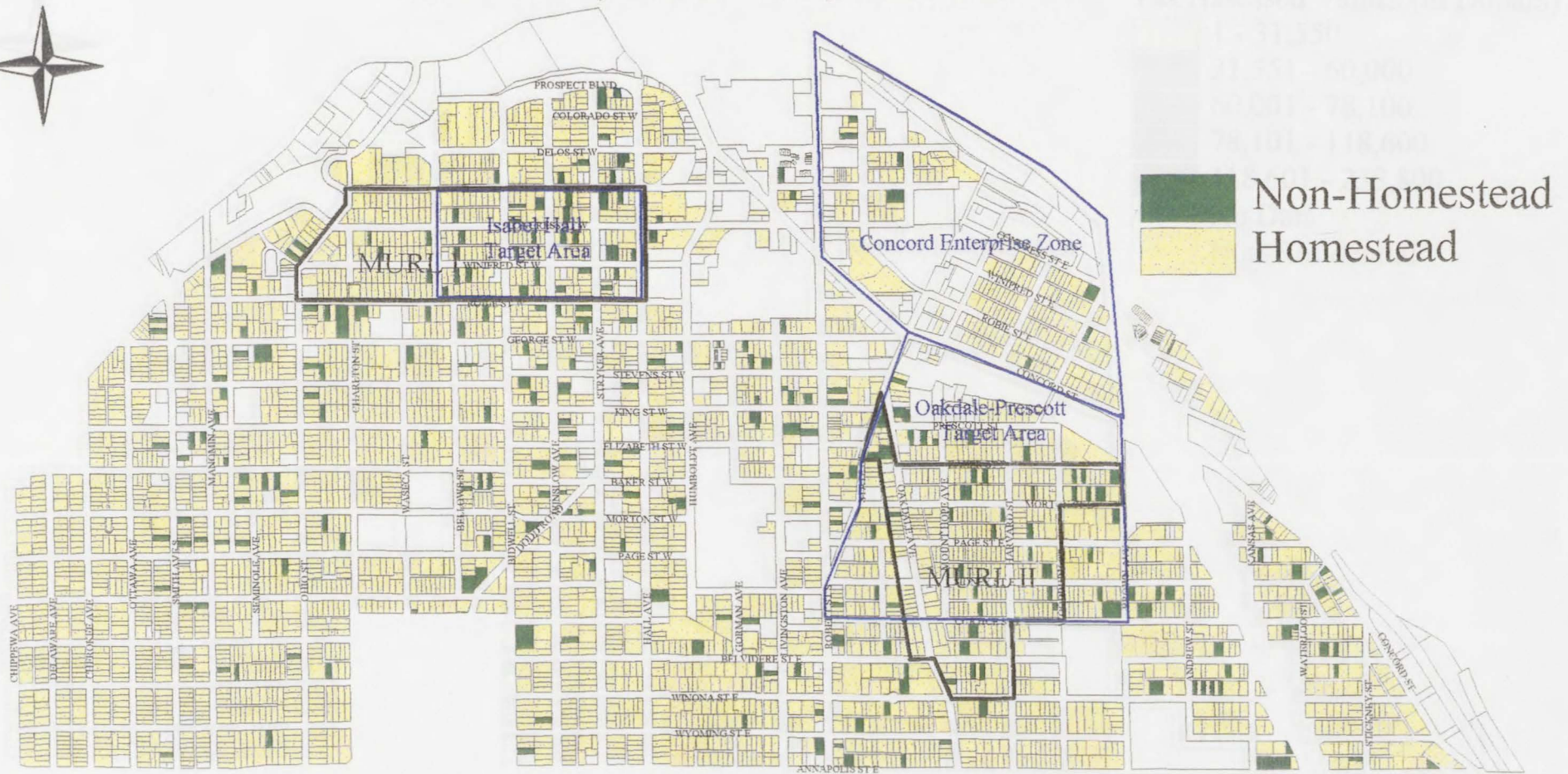
SOURCE: Neighborhood Development Alliance
St. Paul Department of Public Health, Code Enforcement, 1999
St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development, 1999

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Neighborhood Development Alliance

Property Ownership Status

West Side, Saint Paul, Minnesota



SOURCE: 1998 Ramsey County Records and Revenue

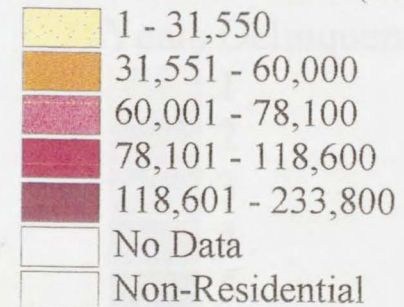
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Eric Myott, mylloe@hotmail.com

Neighborhood Development Alliance Tax Assessed Property Values

West Side, Saint Paul, Minnesota



Tax Assessed Values (In Dollars)



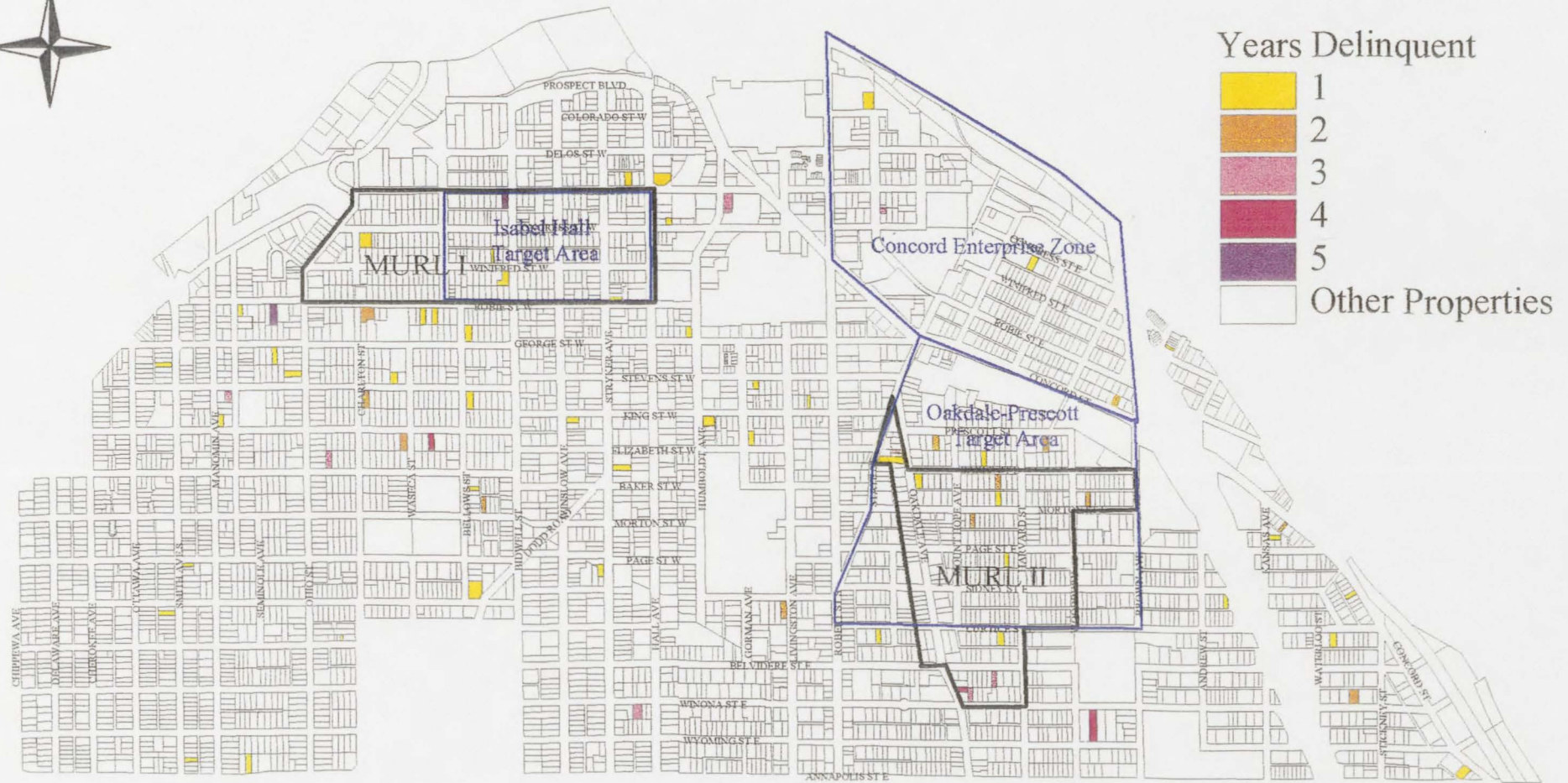
SOURCE: 1998 Ramsey County Records and Revenue

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Neighborhood Development Alliance

Tax Delinquent Properties

West Side, Saint Paul, Minnesota



SOURCE: 1998 Ramsey County Records and Revenue

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